

# Agenda

- I. Introduction to Foster Care Policy
- II. Definition of Partnership
- III. Team Responsibilities
- IV. Benefits of Partnering
- V. Challenges to Partnerships
- VI. Why Can't We All Just Get Along?

# **FOSTER CARE SERVICES: FOSTER PARENTS TEAM MEMBER**

## ***Requirement***

The foster parent shall be actively involved as a participant on the foster care team working toward the permanency plan for a child.

## **1014.49 PROCEDURES**

1. The Services Worker must provide the foster parent with as much information as possible about the child in advance of and/or following placement.

Information to be provided in writing includes the following:

- Form 469, Foster Child Information Sheet (See Appendix J).
- 30-Day Case Plan, Case Review and/or WTLP.
- Updated medical and educational information.

2. The Services Worker must keep the foster parent informed of plans for the child and of birth family information which affects the child.

3. The foster parent shall be provided advance written notice of, and an opportunity to be heard in, any review or hearing to be held regarding the child in the foster parent's care. Relevant information concerning the child may be provided verbally or in writing and considered at the review or hearing. If possible, the foster parent can attend the review or hearing and provide such information in person.

4. Whenever possible, the foster parent should be encouraged to have some parent/child visitation in the foster home to assist the parent in learning to meet the needs of the child. The parent should be willing to assist the birth family in the foster home to learn how to meet the child's special needs.

## **1014.49 PRACTICE ISSUES**

1. The foster parent has the most contact with the child and can offer valuable information about the child's needs and behavior. As a member of the team, the foster parent makes an important contribution to the agency's goals.

2. Information provided by the foster parent should be considered by the case manager when developing and/or updating case plans.

3. Caseworkers should assist foster families in understanding the applicability and content of confidentiality policies.

# Foster Care Team Responsibilities

## **Case Managers**

- Provide comprehensive services that support the child, primary parents, and the foster parents.
- Facilitate access to the community resources necessary to carry out the case plan goals.
- Advocate on behalf of the children and families being served.
- Maintain ongoing communication with the foster family through visits to the foster home at least monthly. Such communication will be open, honest, and candid.
- Provide financial reimbursement for the foster family that will adequately meet the needs of the child in Foster Care.
- Monitor service delivery at regularly scheduled intervals.
- Develop quality assurance standards for services rendered.

## **Primary Parents**

- Use services offered to achieve the goals of the case plan.
- Participate in assessing the services and supports the family needs to achieve reunification.
- Maintain visitation schedule and have regular contact with their child.
- Notify the agency of any important changes (e.g., address, employment, health status) in their lives.
- Contribute financially to the child's care according to their ability to pay.
- Make decisions legally theirs to make about the child's life .

## Resource Parents

- Share the common goal of permanency planning.
- Provide nurturing, basic needs and attention to the child's special needs.
- Support and encourage visitation.
- Assist in helping the primary family meet needs of child.
- Partner and advocate with others on the team for services to meet the child's needs.
- Understand the DFCS environment and agency responsibilities (more will be said on this later).
- Manage the frustration that can result from the dynamics of meeting the individual child's needs, while working with those who are meeting the needs of many children and families.
- Communicate clearly and honestly with DFCS and others on the team about strengths and needs, including what is needed for a successful placement.
- Document on each child the details of the child's experiences in placement. For example, write down the following at the time of placement and when the child leaves your home, as well as at regular intervals in between:
  - ✓ Clothes and personal belongings
  - ✓ Personal hygiene
  - ✓ Physical condition
  - ✓ Behaviors
  - ✓ Social interaction
  - ✓ Speech
  - ✓ Eating patterns
  - ✓ Sleep patterns
  - ✓ Medical conditions
  - ✓ Medication
  - ✓ Response to visits, (i.e., physical condition and behaviors)
  - ✓ Discipline, (i.e., reason, type, duration, frequency)

## **Service Providers**

- Value resource parents as team members, soliciting and using their input regarding services to the child and family.
- Maintain ongoing communication and support with all members of the foster care team.
- Offer easy access to their personnel and services.
- Provide services in their area of expertise that support the child, primary parents and resource parents, according to DFCS standards, in order to reach the case plan goals. (Some formal providers may have these listed in their contract for the agreed upon fee within the designated time frames.)
- Offer emergency or after-hour contact alternatives, such as crisis hot lines, a buddy system or scheduled evenings to be reached.
- Provide regular progress reports (regular being defined by the contract or the team) containing objective family or child outcome information that the team uses in ongoing decision-making.
- Demonstrate or deliver effective services with an appropriate level of safeguards to ensure funds are being spent in accordance with their intent.
- Share in the accountability for ensuring positive outcomes for the child, primary family, and / or resource family.

## Case Manager Challenges to Partnering

Case managers may fear that...

Primary parents will:

- Show up at the resource home at unscheduled times.
- Promise the child something and never follow through, disappointing the child.
- Blame the child for the placement, hurting the child's self concept.
- Ask too much of me e.g., Constantly ask me: for transportation, support, resources, questions about the child, questions about the foster parents, etc.
- Not work towards the steps of the case plan, ultimately causing me to move toward terminating parental rights.
- Begin to meet the goals of the case plan but then stop meeting them.

Resource parents will:

- Never have the child ready on time.
- Never provide transportation for the child.
- Call me for everything.
- Criticize the birth parents in front of the child.
- Ask me to remove the child from their home.
- Tell me how to do everything involving the child (i.e. when the child needs to see the primary parents).

Service providers will:

- Not be able to work with the family due to personality or cultural differences.
- Not be able to bring the family to the level they need to be to have the child returned.
- Not be able to help the child with behavior problems that are impacting placement.
- Not be able to connect with the child and/or family.
- Attempt to dictate decisions about the child that may be legally designated to the agency or family.
- Disagree about the goals of the case plan or try to change them later.

## Primary Parent Challenges to Partnering

Primary parents may fear that...

Resource parents will:

- Think that I am a bad person because my children had to be taken away from me.
- Tell my children I am a bad person and they should no longer love me.
- Give my children material things that I cannot.
- Tell me how I should be raising my children.
- Not understand how hard my life has been.
- Treat me like I am not a good person.

Case manager will:

- Take my child(ren) away/not let me see my child(ren).
- Tell my child(ren) that I am a bad person and should not be loved.
- Make me do things in the case plan that I do not want to do.
- Think I am a bad person for maltreating my child(ren).
- Not understand me or the hard life I have lived.
- Make decisions about my child(ren) without listening to what I want for them.

Service providers will:

- Disclose confidential information
- Make judgments or have preconceived ideas about their family
- Criticize them in front of team
- Recommend plans for children that they disagree with

## Resource Parent Challenges to Partnering

Resource parent may fear that...

Case manager will:

- Tell me how to take care of the child(ren).
- Return the children to the primary parents while there is still danger to them.
- Not help me with the child's transportation needs.
- Not help me figure out ways to control the child's behavior.
- Be angry with me if the placement does not work out.
- Not allow or value their input in case planning/case reviews/hearings .
- Not be available during times of immediate needs.

Primary parents will:

- Harm the child again once the child is returned home.
- Make promises to the child and then not keep them, leaving me to take care of the disappointed child.
- Fail to assist with developing the child's Life Book
- Show up at my home at all hours of the day/call my home at all hours of the day.
- Threaten to harm my family and me.

Service providers will:

- Not agree with or support the plan that is in the "best interest of the child"
- Criticize their efforts
- Not value their feedback
- Not be available in emergencies



## **Service Provider Challenges to Partnering**

Service provider may fear that:

Case manager will:

- Be inaccessible.
- Have unrealistic goals.
- Not be available for recommended follow-up.

Primary parents will:

- Be overly dependent or attached.
- Will be unmotivated or not follow through.
- Be unwilling to cooperate.

Resource parents will:

- Have a problem “letting go”.
- Have animosity regarding differences about what is in the “best interest of the child”.
- Criticize primary parent in front of child.
- Not be willing to listen to recommendations on how to better help the child.